



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Seattle Public Utilities

Chuck Clarke, Director

February 19, 2004

Mr. Bruce Lorig
Lorig Associates
2025 First Avenue, Ste 420
Seattle, WA 98121

Dear Mr. Lorig:

Thank you for your February 18, 2004 letter to Mayor Greg Nickels regarding preliminary planning for the Northgate south lot pursuant to Seattle City Council's Northgate Framework Resolution 30642. The Mayor has asked me to respond to you on his behalf. This letter 1) summarizes the role of Seattle Public Utilities established by the resolution, 2) provides a status on the development of natural system options for the South lot, and 3) outlines the next steps for evaluation, public involvement and developing a final recommendation to the council for consideration.

The Northgate Framework Resolution directs Seattle Public Utilities to work with Lorig Associates to coordinate planning for the Northgate south lot, and timely accomplishment of this work is needed to enable the city's decision to purchase the south lot 2.7 acres. Specifically, the resolution directs that the City and Lorig jointly develop three options for integrating natural drainage strategies and open space on the south lot including daylighting, a natural drainage system option, and a hybrid of the two. Furthermore, the resolution directs the City to involve the community through the Northgate stakeholders group and community forums. This stakeholders group will have broad representation of Northgate community interests. As outlined in the resolution, both the Thornton Creek Alliance and Thornton Creek Legal Defense Fund have seats along with King County, Simon Properties, community groups, Northgate businesses, and several other community interests.

Per the resolution, SPU staff has been working with SvR Design Company to develop a natural drainage system option, which could provide water quality treatment of 35-40 acres of drainage from adjacent neighborhoods in a natural drainage system channel on the south lot. Further analysis is needed to determine which contributing drainage basin would provide the most cost-effective water quality benefits.

I also understand that Lorig Associates and the Thornton Creek Legal Defense Fund have retained consultants Peggy Gaynor and PACE Engineering on a limited contract to develop a preliminary concept for the hybrid option. This option proposes to keep the conveyance pipe under the south lot in place and divert low flows to a surface channel.

Mr. Bruce Lorig
February 19, 2004
Page Two

My staff has participated in several technical discussions of this option with you and your consultants and have identified preliminary feasibility issues which include:

- 1) the proposal to back-water—partially block the conveyance pipe to elevate and divert low flows to the surface channel—may increase the frequency and severity of flooding higher up in the system, and
- 2) the elevation of the proposed surface channel may conflict with the existing conveyance pipe and the private detention structure which would require removing the existing private detention pipe and replacing this volume of flow control elsewhere.
- 3) the cost of substantial excavation, grading, and retaining walls.

In our discussions with the community we must reiterate that the back-watering and grade elevation issues are feasibility questions that must be resolved before we can effectively evaluate all three options.

I understand that either the natural systems drainage alternative or the hybrid option would work with your proposed lot configuration. The third option, completely daylighting the conveyance pipe under the South lot, was evaluated in 2000 and no new analysis is being undertaken at this time.

Your letter states that you and your consultants have now completed work on the preliminary concept for the hybrid option and that you would like the City to move forward with the evaluation and recommendation process directed by the council. All three options, daylighting, natural systems drainage, and the hybrid must be equally subjected to rigorous analysis of engineering feasibility, water quality and detention benefits, cost-effectiveness, risks and construct-ability. Furthermore, due to the legal restrictions on the use of the drainage fund, our evaluation must include a review of the water quality and flow benefits to Thornton Creek and ensure that any recommendation for SPU funding provide drainage benefits commensurate with the full life-cycle cost including risks and long-term maintenance. We propose that the cost analyses undergo a professional external peer review.

In addition, I believe the technical collaboration with Gaynor, Inc. and PACE Consultants has been very productive thus far, and we concur with your suggestion to continue to involve these firms during our evaluation. I have directed my staff to contract directly with these firms to employ them as part of the team to evaluate all three options.

Mr. Bruce Lorig
February 19, 2004
Page Three

Thank you for your assistance in furthering the development of options. As we begin the feasibility analysis, our next steps are to involve the public through the Northgate stakeholders group and community forums as directed by the Northgate Framework Resolution. In the end, we hope to recommend an option that will work well with your development requirements, fulfill several important goals of the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan, as well as meet SPU objectives to improve water quality for Thornton Creek.

Sincerely,

(signature on file)

Chuck Clarke
Director, Seattle Public Utilities

cc: Mayor
Councilmembers
Thornton Creek Alliance
Thornton Creek Legal Defense Fund.